

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 979
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 8629

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SY, EG, IS
SUBJECT: ASAD VISIT TO CAIRO

1. DAMASCUS NEWS MEDIA ANNOUNCED THAT PRESIDENT ASAD WILL PROCEED TO CAIRO DECEMBER 18 ACCOMPANIED BY FONMIN KHADDAM, FORMER DEPRIMIN FOR ECON AFFAIRS MUHAMMAD HAYDAR, AF COMMANDER NAJI JAMIL, PROGRESSIVE NATIONAL FRONT (PNF) MEMBER FAYIZ ISMAIL, PNF MEMBER FAWZI KAYYALI, MINSTATE FOR PRESIDENTIAL AFFAIRS MILHIM, MINSTATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS ABD AL-KARIM ADI, INFOMIN AHMAD ISKANDAR AHMAD, AND PRESIDENT'S POLITICAL COUNSELOR DR. ADIB DAOUDI.

2. MEANWHILE LEBANESE PRIMIN AL-HOSS ARRIVED DAMASCUS NOON DECEMBER 17 FOR TALKS WITH ASAD WHICH WILL PRESUMABLY FOCUS ON CAIRO MEETINGS.

3. CLOSE ASSOCIATE HAYDAR HAS TOLD US THAT LATTER EXPECTED VISIT WOULD NOT EXCEED TWO DAYS IN CAIRO. (IF VISIT IS PROLOGNED, HAYDAR WILL DEPART FOR NEXT WEEK'S MEETING OF JOINT SYRO-ROMANIAN ECONOMIC COMMISSION IN BUCHAREST.) SOURCE ADDED
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THAT HAYDAR HAD TOLD HIM HIS ADVICE TO ASAD ON PEACE NEGOTIATIONS WAS TO LET SADAT STAY OUT IN FRONT, REACH WHATEVER AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL WOULD BE POSSIBLE AND THEN SIMPLY SIGN ON FOR SYRIA.

4. COMMENT: THIS MARKS OFFICIAL REHABILITATION IN PRESIDENCY COUNCIL

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OF HAYDAR, WHO RETAINS HIS POSITION ON BAATH PARTY NATIONAL COMMAND, AFTER HE DROPPED FROM CABINET OF FORMER PRIMIN AYYUBI IN AUGUST. ACCORDING TO BUSINESS ASSOCIATE OF HAYDAR, FORMER DEPPRIMIN HAS GOTTEN OVER HAS FALL FROM POWER, IS BACK WORKING FULL TIME AT NC HEADQUARTERS AND CONTINUES TO ENJOY CONSIDERABLE POWER. WE UNDERSTAND HE STILL CONSULTED FREQUENTLY BY PRESIDENT ASAD ON VARIOUS ECONOMIC PROJECTS THAT REGIME HAS UNDER CONSIDERATION. WE SURPRISED THAT KHADDAM'S DOCTORS HAVE PERMITTED HIM TO TRAVEL SO SOON FOLLOWING HIS RELEASE EARLIER THIS WEEK FROM HOSPITAL; WE SUSPECT HE INSISTED ON ATTENDING. ADI MAY RELIEVE KHADDAM OF SOME OF THE DETAILED WORK IN COORDINATING FOREIGN AFFAIRS ISSUES, AND MAY SERVE AS LINK TO PALESTINIANS WITH WHOM HE HAD BEEN MEETING IN DAMASCUS. (ADI IS BECOMING MORE IMPORTANT FIGURE IN FONMINISTRY THAN WE HAD ANTICIPATED.) SELECTION OF TWO NON-COMMUNIST NATIONAL FRONT REPS SURPRISING. KAYYALI, AS LEADER OF NASSERITE ARAB SOCIALIST UNION IS NATURAL SELECTION. BUT ISMAIL, HEAD OF MINISCULE SOCIALIST UNIONIST PARTY, IS A NOBODY. ABSENCE OF CPS LEADER BAKDASH DIMINISHES PRESENTATION OF UNITED FRONT IN SYRIAN DELEGATION THAT ASAD COULD HAVE USED TO HELP RECONCILE SADAT AND SOVIET LEADERS AS WELL AS DEMONSTRATE IMPROVED STATUS OF COMMUNIST PARTY IN SYRIA. FINALLY, WE NOTE THAT JAMIL IS ONLY MILITARY FIGURE INCLUDED AND PROBABLY BECAUSE OF HIS DEEP INVOLVEMENT AS MEDIATOR IN THE LEBANESE CRISIS RATHER THAN HIS STATUS AS DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER.

MURPHY

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